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AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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July 20, 2006

TO: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley 
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **GROUP HOME PROGRAM MONITORING REPORT – OPTIMIST
YOUTH HOMES AND FAMILY SERVICES, MAIN CAMPUS GROUP
HOME**

We have completed a review of the Main Campus Group Home (Group Home or Agency) operated by Optimist Youth Homes and Family Services, Incorporated. The Group Home contracts with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Probation Department (Probation).

The Main Campus Group Home is a 100-bed facility, which provides care for boys ages 12-18 years who exhibit behavioral, social, and emotional difficulties. At the time of the monitoring visit, the Main Campus Group Home was providing services for 73 Los Angeles County Probation children, 15 Riverside County children, two Alameda County children, two San Bernardino County children, and one Sacramento County child.

The Main Campus Group Home is located in the Fifth District.

Scope of Review

The purpose of the review is to determine whether the Agency is providing the services as outlined in their Program Statement. Additionally, the review covers basic child safety and licensing issues, and includes an evaluation of the Agency's Program Statement, internal policies and procedures, child case records, a facility inspection,

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and interviews with children placed in the Group Home at the time of the review. Interviews with children are designed to obtain their perspectives on the program services provided by the Agency, and to ensure adherence to the Foster Youth Bill of Rights.

Summary of Findings

Generally, the Agency is providing the services as outlined in their Program Statement. The Agency needs to address the following deficient areas:

Main Campus Group Home needs to clean or repaint the walls throughout the Group Home; clean and repair or replace the armoires in all the bedrooms; include input from the child in the development and implementation of the Needs and Services Plans; develop comprehensive Needs and Services Plans that include short and long-term goals; provide children with a classroom environment that limits distractions and is more conducive to learning; provide children with sufficient opportunities to participate in planning activities; allow children to have private telephone calls and receive unopened mail; provide all children with the required minimum weekly allowance; and allow children to spend their allowances as they choose.

Attached is a detailed report of the review.

Review of Report

We discussed our report with the Agency's management. In response to the recommendations made in the report, the Agency's management completed a corrective action plan (attached) which we approved. We thank the management and staff for their cooperation during our review.

If you have any questions, please contact me, or have your staff contact Mike Pirolo at (626) 293-1110.

JTM:MP:CC:ec
http://auditor.co.la.ca.us/group_home.asp

Attachments

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
David Sanders, Ph.D., Director, DCFS
Robert B. Taylor, Chief Probation Officer
Silvio John Orlando, Executive Director, Optimist Youth Homes and Family
Services, Inc.
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

**Optimist Youth Homes and Family Services
Main Campus Group Home
6957 North Figueroa Street
Los Angeles, California 90041
Phone: (323) 443-3180
License Number: 191801986
Rate Classification Level: 12**

I. Facility and Environment

Method of assessment – Observation

Comments:

Main Campus Group Home is located in a residential community. The exterior of the Group Home is well maintained. The front and back yards are clean, and adequately landscaped.

Overall, the interior of the Group Home is well maintained. The common quarters are neat and clean. There is adequate furniture and lighting in the Group Home. The Group Home provides a home-like environment. However, the walls throughout the Group Home are dirty.

Overall, children's bedrooms are well maintained. The rooms are clean and orderly, and have age-appropriate personalized decorations. There is adequate furniture, lighting, and storage space. However, the armoires are dirty, and worn or damaged in all of the bedrooms. Window coverings and window screens are in good repair. The mattresses are comfortable, and the beds all have a full complement of linens. Children's sleeping arrangements are appropriate.

The Group Home maintains age appropriate and accessible recreational equipment. There are also board games, a TV, and a DVD player. Books and resource materials, including a computer with a variety of programs, are also available.

The Group Home maintains a sufficient supply of perishable and non perishable foods.

Recommendations

1. Optimist Youth Homes and Family Services Group Home management:

- a. Clean or re-paint the walls throughout the Group Home as needed.**
- b. Clean or replace the armoires in all the bedrooms.**

II. Program Services

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and interviews

Sample size for interviews: 8

Comments:

Children meet the Group Home's population criteria as outlined in their Program Statement. Children are assessed for needed services within thirty days of placement.

The Needs and Service Plans (NSPs) are current; however, input from the child is not included in the development and implementation of the NSPs. The NSPs are not comprehensive, and do not include short or long-term goals.

Case files reflect adequate documentation to show that children are receiving treatment services.

Recommendations

2. Optimist Youth Homes and Family Services Group Home management:

- c. Include input from the child in the development and implementation of the NSPs.**
- d. Develop comprehensive NSPs that are specific, attainable, realistic, time limited, and include short and long-term goals.**

III. Educational and Emancipation Services

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and interviews

Sample size for interviews: 8

Comments:

Children are attending school. Children are provided with educational support and resources to meet their educational needs, and are progressing satisfactorily in school. However, in each classroom, there are two or more subjects being taught at the same time, causing distractions and an increase in the noise level. Children describe the classroom environment as disruptive, and report difficulty concentrating and focusing on the lessons being taught.

The Group Home's program includes the development of children's daily living, self-help, and survival skills.

Children are provided with opportunities to participate in emancipation and vocational programs as appropriate.

Recommendation

3. Optimist Youth Homes and Family Services Group Home management provide children with a classroom environment that limits distractions and is more conducive to learning.

IV. Recreation and Activities

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and interviews

Sample size for interviews: 8

Comments:

The Group Home provides children with sufficient recreational activities, and leisure time. However, children are not provided with sufficient opportunities to participate in planning activities.

Children participate in extra-curricular, enrichment, and social activities in which they have an interest.

The Group Home provides transportation to and from the activities.

Recommendation

4. Optimist Youth Homes and Family Services Group Home management provide children with sufficient opportunities to participate in planning activities.

V. Psychotropic Medication

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents

Comments:

Children have current court authorizations for psychotropic medication. Documentation confirms that children are routinely seen by the prescribing psychiatrist.

Children are informed about their psychotropic medication, and are aware of their right to refuse medication.

Medication distribution logs are properly maintained.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

VI. Personal Rights**Method of assessment –Interviews with children**

Sample size for interviews: 8

Comments:

Children are informed about the Group Home's policies and procedures. Children report that they feel safe in the Group Home, and are provided with appropriate staff supervision. Children express satisfaction with the quality of their interactions with staff, and report that staff treats them with respect and dignity.

Children report that they are assigned chores that are reasonable and not too demanding. Children are able to make and receive personal telephone calls, send mail, and have private visitors. However, children are not allowed to have private phone conversations without the presence of a staff, or receive unopened mail. Children are able to attend religious services of their choice.

Children report that the discipline policies are consistently enforced and that there are fair and appropriate consequences for inappropriate behavior.

Children report satisfaction with meals and snacks.

Children receive voluntary medical, dental, and psychiatric care.

Recommendation

- 5. Optimist Youth Homes and Family Services Group Home management allow children to have private telephone conversations, and receive unopened mail.**

VII. Clothing and Allowance**Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and interviews**

Sample size for interviews: 8

Comments:

The Group Home provides appropriate clothing, items of necessity, and the required \$50 monthly clothing allowance to children. Children are provided with opportunities to select their own clothes. Clothing provided to children is of good quality and of sufficient quantity.

The Group Home does not provide children with the required weekly allowance. Children report they are not allowed to spend their allowances as they choose.

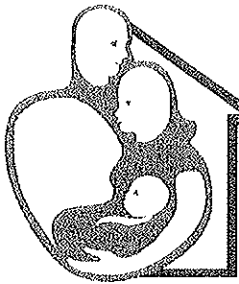
The Group Home provides children with adequate personal care items.

Children are encouraged and assisted in creating and maintaining photo albums/life books.

Recommendations:

6. Optimist Youth Homes and Family Services Group Home management.

- a. Provide children with the required minimum weekly allowance.**
- b. Allow children to spend their allowances as they choose.**



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OPTIMIST

Youth Homes & Family Services

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Executive Director

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Associate Director

Joseph M. Bonant, JD, Ph.D.
Associate Director

Douglas E. Buttrick
Director of Finance

Joan E. Probst, LMFT
Associate Director

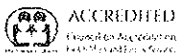
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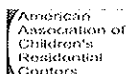
April 13, 2006

Dear Ms. Rhue:

Affiliations



Accredited by



Based on the audit done at our Main Campus Residential Facility on 3/6/06 – 3/8/06 and based on your report from 4/12/06 we are forwarding our Plan of Correction.

Please contact us, if you have any further questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Maria Bhattachan, Director of Quality Improvement

Silvio John Orlando, Executive Director

Attachments

**Annual Site Visit of the Auditor-Controller on 3/6/06 – 3/8/06
Auditor: Elaine Clarke**

PLAN OF CORRECTION

Facility and Environment

Recommendation 1a: Clean or re-paint the walls throughout the group home as needed.

Corrective Action:

All walls throughout the dorms will be painted by May 31, 2006. In addition, dorm staff do monthly safety and cleanliness inspections, and the QI Department does safety and health checks every 3 months. We will make sure that staff keep a closer eye on the walls and request re-painting as needed.

Recommendation 1b: Clean or replace the armoires in all the bedrooms.

Corrective Action:

All armoires were cleaned by our contracting cleaning service agency on 3/13/06. On 3/8/06 a memo was sent to the Residential Director to add the cleaning of the clients' armoires (closets) to the clients' daily chores. We also specified the armoires on our monthly safety/ environmental rounds checklist for the dorms to ensure staff look at them more closely and request deep cleaning as needed.

Program Services:

Recommendation 2a: Include the child in the development and implementation of the NSPs.

Corrective Action:

OYHFS has always followed the guidelines to involve the clients in the developing of their Needs & Services Plans, and all Needs & Services Plans have been signed by client and social worker as required. Since the clients, who were interviewed by the auditor, didn't confirm that, our program directors will discuss this matter with all social workers to find better ways to make the clients understand the Needs & Services Plans, which they sign every 3 months. The plans state very clearly the clients' goals and their progress toward these goals, their needs and a plan for meeting those needs and their progress toward meeting those needs.

Recommendation 2b: Develop comprehensive Needs & Services Plans that are specific, attainable, realistic, time limited, and include long- and short-term goals.

Corrective Action:

Our Executive Team met on 3/14/06 and discussed the developing of Needs & Services Plans. All program directors were instructed to go back to there teams and make sure that from now on goals described on the NSP's have to be more specific, attainable, realistic, time limited, and include long- and short-term goals. Our social workers are already aware of this concept and in fact apply it to the County's DMH forms already.

PLAN OF CORRECTION - continues

Recreation and Activities:

Recommendation 3: OYHFS group home management provide children with sufficient opportunities to participate in planning activities.

Corrective Action:

From now on our Resident Council, which meets on a monthly basis, will have recreational activities as an ongoing agenda item to discuss the residents' needs and wishes. In addition, the recreation director will discuss his plans for outings and other recreational activities with our residents more often.

Personal Rights

Recommendation 4: OYHFS group home management allow children to have private telephone conversations and receive unopened mail.

Corrective Action:

A memo was sent out on 3/8/06 and another one on 4/13/06 to remind staff that they are not allowed to open our clients' mail. If there is any suspicion of contraband in the mail, clients will have to open their mail in front of staff, and staff will check content of letters for appropriateness (see resident mail guidelines). In the same memo staff were also reminded that our residents have the right to receive private phone calls. Management will ensure that this is happening from now on.

Clothing and Allowance

Recommendation 5a: Provide children with the required minimum allowance on a weekly basis and provide a signature log.

Corrective Action:

OYHFS has always followed the standard of giving the children \$7.00 per week allowance though it has been deposited into their accounts bi-weekly. Starting May 1st, the money will be given to the clients on a weekly basis, and they will sign off for receiving the money on the LIC 405 (Record of Client's Safeguarded Cash Resources).

Recommendation 5b: Allow children to spend their allowances as they choose.

Corrective Action:

OYHFS' policy was to give our clients \$5 when going on their home passes and \$2 during the week to spend for other things. As a result of this audit, since 3/24/06 the residents have been allowed to take \$7 out of their accounts when going on a home pass.

Maria Bhattachan 03/22/06, revised 04/13/06

Attachments - POC:

- Invoice for armoire cleaning
- Memo 3/8/06
- Monthly Environmental Rounds Checklist for Dorms
- ET minutes
- Memo 4/13/06
- Resident Mail and Phone Call guidelines
- LIC 405

Maria Bhattachan 04/13/06